

expression, but it does criminalize violence against a person based upon their perceived race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. In fact, a long and diverse list of religious organizations have spoken out in favor of H.R. 1592, including groups representing Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim and Sikh faiths.

No longer will this body be silent for the millions of Americans that too often have no voice in the world.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this legislation.

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to show my support for H.R. 1592, The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007.

Freedoms of speech, expression, and equal protection under the law are the founding principles of this country. The Constitution guarantees these rights to all Americans. I believe that it is our duty to fight for the equal rights of all Americans, regardless of their race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

I abhor all violent crimes. Attacks that are motivated by hate are attacks on a whole class of people. Such hate crimes are intended to instill fear in an entire community and are particularly heinous. We must give law enforcement the proper tools to investigate and prosecute crimes that are motivated by hate.

Laws punishing hate crimes are not intended to value one group over another, but rather to acknowledge the historical bias against certain minority groups and opinions so that all can enjoy the same legal protections as the majority. Hate crime laws protect innocent people and allow them to engage in everyday activity without fear.

I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of this important legislation. This bill helps to better define a hate crime and prevents the erosion of civil liberties critical to our democracy.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support the Hate Crimes Prevention Act. Our country values diversity, values individuality, values different cultures and respects people for who they are. Hate crimes are simply un-American.

In 2005, there were over 7,000 Federal hate crimes committed in this country, but the current law does not cover most true hate crimes.

Late last year in New York, three men lured Michael J. Sandy to a parking lot, beat him and chased him into traffic where he was struck by a car. He died 5 days later, one day after his 29th birthday. Why did these attackers target Michael J. Sandy? Because he was gay.

Today, Mr. Sandy's attackers can not be prosecuted under Federal law for two reasons. First, in order to be a Federal hate crime, a victim must be engaged in a federally protected activity such as voting. Second, the current hate crime law does not consider sexual orientation a protected class.

The Hate Crimes Prevention Act will sensibly expand the definition of a Federal hate crime to cover all violent crimes motivated by race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability when the defendant causes bodily injury or attempts to cause bodily injury through the use of a firearm or an explosive device.

Thankfully, New York law has allowed this case to be prosecuted as a hate crime, but it

is time to update our Federal laws to protect our citizens.

The bill will also give local law enforcement the help they need in solving and prosecuting these despicable crimes. Some of these cases can strain local resources, but under this legislation, law enforcement can reach out and secure Federal resources to pursue these complex cases.

Because the bill makes common sense reforms, the bill has enjoyed wide bipartisan support. In fact, the bill is supported by 31 State Attorneys General and over 280 national law enforcement, professional, education, civil rights, religious, and civic organizations.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this critical legislation.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in strong support of H.R. 1592, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which would address the appalling crimes that continue to occur today simply because of a person's race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of H.R. 1592 because it is the government's responsibility to defend the civil liberties of every American and prosecute acts of aggression directed at a specific group of individuals. Current federal law provides for enhanced sentencing for hate crimes, however, the vast majority of these crimes are not tried in federal court. This bill would make it a federal crime to cause, or attempt to cause, bodily harm to another person through the use of fire, a firearm, or an explosive device because of the victim's actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, gender or sexual orientation. Opponents of this bill claim that it would chip away at First Amendment rights. On the contrary, H.R. 1592 would protect First Amendment speech and is only intended to prosecute acts of violence.

The bill would also provide federal assistance to states and local jurisdictions to prosecute hate crimes. Specifically, the measure would authorize the Attorney General to make grants available to state and local law enforcement agencies that have incurred extraordinary expenses associated with the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes. Currently, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) collects statistics on crimes based on race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and disability. This legislation would require that the FBI collect statistics on gender and gender identity-related bias crimes.

I applaud Chairman CONYERS and members of the House Judiciary Committee for their tireless efforts and leadership on this landmark legislation. I would also like to single out the efforts of the gentlewoman from Wisconsin, Ms. BALDWIN, and the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. FRANK, for their leadership on this issue. During my tenure in the House of Representatives and as a father of three children, I have been a consistent supporter of this measure and believe it is a tragedy that terrible injustices continue to occur in the 21st century. Our nation was founded on the principles of liberty and justice for all and these hate crimes run counter to our national conscience.

I believe Robert F. Kennedy spoke most eloquently on this issue while commenting on the loss of Dr. Martin Luther King: "What we need in the United States is not division; what

we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence or lawlessness; but love and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country * * *." Today's legislation takes us one further step towards the kind of nation Senator Kennedy and Dr. King worked for and I encourage my colleagues to join me in voting for it.

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 1592, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act. Let me say from the outset: I am strongly opposed to violent crimes committed against an individual, regardless of the motivation of the person committing it. That is why I support strong state and local prosecution measures to curb violent crime and increase safety in our communities. In fact, I am a principal supporter in Congress for increasing Federal funding for state and local law enforcement officers to curb gang and drug crimes, which often leads to violent crimes.

I have also spent considerable time in my district meeting with groups who have experienced discrimination or have been targets of violent behavior simply due to their race, religion or sexual orientation. The concerns they have raised with me have weighed heavily on my mind, and have caused me to reconsider my views on our Constitution's Tenth Amendment.

In the past, I have not supported Federal hate crimes legislation since it has traditionally been the responsibility of state and local prosecutors rather than the Federal Government. States have the right to apprehend and prosecute criminals under their own criminal codes, which must be respected. They also have the right to enhance penalties as they see fit, and many states have taken that step. My own state of Nebraska enacted comprehensive hate crimes legislation in 1997.

The Nebraska legislation authorizes judges to impose harsher penalties in criminal cases when a determination is made that the crime was committed due to the victim's race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability or because of his or her association with persons who fit the specified classifications. The enhanced penalties for hate crimes provided for in the statute would be the next highest penalty classification above the one statutorily imposed for the crime, with the death penalty as the only exception. A broad variety of criminal charges could be enhanced, including manslaughter, assault, terroristic threats, stalking, kidnapping, false imprisonment, sexual assault of an adult or child, arson, criminal mischief, and criminal trespass. Our state statutes also provide victims with the authority to bring civil actions against attackers.

The actions taken by Nebraska and so many other states are appropriate because the states have the ability to expand their criminal codes as each sees fit. At the same time, there is no Federal nexus and thus no need for duplicative Federal legislation.

The Tenth Amendment is clear: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." At some point, we have to stop federalizing every problem in the country, no matter how large or small. When the states are addressing a problem effectively, there is